

What Is True for *Me* About Who I Am?

A Personal Workbook

Developed by Reverend Jane Beach

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A Personal Workbook

Dear Friend,

This course is about you! What could be better?! There is so much to read about what others think, but when it comes right down to it, all that matters is what *you* think.

The series “What is True for *Me*?” is designed as a personal workbook, a journal in which to contemplate *your* thoughts, opinions, questions, revelations, and everything that comes in-between. You will read articles that will present ideas for you to consider, followed by questions which will ask you to reach deep inside yourself to discover what *you* truly believe.

There is no right or wrong. The beauty is the rich, authentic awakening to who you know yourself to be today, in this time and space in your life.

It is my great joy to walk alongside you, honoring every step you take, even when it's one step forward and two backward. Remember, your journey is perfect, just as it is.

With gratitude and love,

Jane

Rev. Jane Beach

revjanebeach@consciouslivingcenter.org

www.consciouslivingcenter.org

What Is True for *Me* About Who I Am?

A Personal Workbook

- ♥ Week 1 How Do I Know Myself?
- ♥ Week 2 What Is True About My Story?
- ♥ Week 3 What Is True About My Choices?
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Class Agreements

Attendance and Active Participation

This course is about you. Your willingness to deepen your personal understanding of who you are – and what *you* believe is true – has brought you to this class. Therefore, attendance and active participation are the foundation of the journey, crucial for the experience that lies ahead.

Workbook Writing

The best way to move through your workbook is to first read the title page and then all the articles for that week. This gives you an idea of the overall concepts being presented. You can bet that ideas and insights will start percolating! Then go back and do the written work, giving it your undivided time and attention.

Spend quality time writing down your thoughts and feelings about each article in the workbook. Don't just answer in phrases – write down full sentences that convey your thoughts. Not only does this deepen your personal unfolding experience, it also helps you express your perspective during class dialog.

You will get as much out of this class as you put into it, so bring yourself wholly into the experience. You will be glad you did!

Final Project Thought Paper: “What is True About Me?”

Your final project is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True About Me?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to consider such questions as:

- What have I learned about myself?
- How have I changed? Why do I think the changes have taken place? What has been the result?
- How am I choosing to get involved in my life today?
- What do I most appreciate about my life?
- Where is the God of my understanding in all of it?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented on the last night of class. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.

The Importance of Sharing

You will find that sharing your insights and experiences and learning from others is an important part of the class. The purpose of sharing is multifaceted. It provides an opportunity to share from your own experience, as well as develop the ability to listen and really hear other people, and to benefit from their sharing.

Guidelines for Sharing

Confidentiality

- What is said in class stays in class.
- What is said in a small break-out group stays within that group. When you share with the whole group, share your insights only, instead of the revelation of someone else in the small group.

Sharing with respect

- Speak about your own feelings and experiences and not about what someone else has shared as their feelings or experiences.
- Actively listen while another person is sharing and then refrain from commenting or giving advice (no “fixing”).
- Once a person has shared, the response of the others in the group is “Thank you,” and then the next person shares. This helps keep the tendency to comment and “fixing” at bay.
- Respect the rights of others and share one time only in each sharing opportunity. If you later remember something wonderful you intended to share, wait until everyone else has had a turn to share.
- Be sensitive to the amount of class time you spend in sharing. If sharing is easy for you hold back in order to allow time for others. If sharing is more difficult for you, learn to speak up and share yourself.

At the center of your being you have the answer, you know who you are, and you know what you want.

- Lao Tzu

Week 1

Trust yourself, then you will know how to live.

- Johann Wolfgang van Goethe

How Do I Know Myself?

We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined.

This Week

- N. Scott Momaday

This week we explore the question, “Who am I?” We wear many hats and engage in countless roles, and all are opportunities to interact in our very human environment. At the same time, past our gender, socio-economic status, race, and age, lies a hidden wholeness that shines a light in all that we do. We are a glorious blend of human experience and spiritual perfection.

You were born an original. Don't die a copy.

- John Mason

Is life not a hundred times too short for us to stifle ourselves?

- Friedrich Nietzsche



How Do I Know Myself?

Today, how do I know myself? What do I think of when I consider who I am? What is important to me? What am I attracted to? What do I avoid? What parts of me am I pleased with? What might I change? What would my friends say about me? What do *I* say about me?

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these two pages for some beginning thoughts about how I know myself today.

How do I know myself (continued)



There is nothing wrong with you.

From *Shift Happens!*

By Robert Holden

The following story describes one of the most poignant and tender moments of my life.

I met Peter at a summer camp for The Royal National Institute of Blind People in Hampshire, England. Peter was in my class. I was teaching a day on self-esteem to 50 teenagers. They were like any large group of teenagers in school – creative, unruly, funny, boisterous, challenging, and very energetic. They were normal ... and blind.

Peter was one of the few quiet ones. He sat at the back of the class. He was half-Chinese, half-English, about 15 years old, tall, and slender. There were many jokes flying around, most of them at my expense. Peter laughed heartily, but he never spoke. At the end of the class, he stayed behind. “Mr. Holden,” he said.

“Call me Robert,” I said.

“Can we talk?” he asked.

“Certainly.”

Peter looked troubled. He was pensive and painfully shy. We talked small talk for a while as we walked around a large green sports field out behind the main college building. “I feel I can trust you, Robert, even though we’ve only just met,” he said.

“That’s a real compliment,” I said.

“I need to ask you a question that I have been putting off my whole life,” Peter said.

I was in no way prepared for Peter’s question when it finally came. “I need to know,” he said, “is there anything wrong with me?”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“I was born blind, and I have never seen myself. I need to know from someone I trust if I am beautiful or not,” Peter said.

With all my heart, I told Peter that he was handsome, perfect, and beautiful.

“You really mean it?” he asked.

“Yes – totally.”

Peter flung his arms around me.

“There’s nothing wrong with me?”

“No!”

“Not even a little bit wrong?”

“Not one bit.”

“What about my breath? I had pizza for lunch,” he laughed.

“I love garlic,” I countered. We both laughed and cried. Rarely have I felt so moved. Peter’s relief was such a joy to watch.

For six years I trained in a profession that focuses on finding things wrong with people. We take in “ugly ducklings” and merrily pluck away for disorders, dysfunctions, neuroses, psychoses, syndromes, and schemas. Psychology is obsessed with diagnosis. Every day we invent new labels, new diseases, and new courses of treatment for the “ugly ducklings.” We never see them as swans.

The fear that something is wrong with you is your greatest block to joy. In truth, there is no other block.

For as long as you feel there is something wrong, bad, lacking, or not good enough about you, your life will reflect this belief. On the face of it, it will look as though others reject you, the world blocks you, fate is unkind, life is against you, and the Heavens are punishing you. But in fact, it is you who are condemning yourself and sabotaging all that is good. Hence everything is a struggle, successes are hard-fought, happiness is short-lived, love always goes wrong, and there is no peace.

There is nothing wrong with you. Certainly, your perception can be sick. And your thinking can be off. And you can make poor choices. For instance, you can choose to see flaws in yourself that no one else sees. You can invent a story of how bad you are. You can try to convince the world how unlovable you are. Give these strange ideas all of your power, if you want, *but who you are – your Unconditional Self [your divine potential, spiritual essence] – remains whole, worthy and well.*

True psychotherapy is a process of changing your mind about yourself. Shift happens whenever you practice *unconditional* self-acceptance. Shift happens whenever you give yourself a break. Shift happens when you choose kindness instead of judgment, forgiveness instead of self-attack, and laughter instead of condemnation. Life always gets better when you treat yourself better.

Happiness is about being willing to be innocent again. Remember that old bumper sticker, *God doesn’t make junk?* It’s true.

Write about a time you treated yourself kindly after making a mistake – you let yourself off the hook. What were the circumstances?

How did it feel to treat yourself kindly?

Ask: In what situation today might I be open to letting myself off the hook and treating myself kindly?

If I do not decide to let myself off the hook, what might be the consequences?

If I do decide to let myself off the hook, what might be the advantages?

Do I agree with the statement, “Life always gets better when you treat yourself better.”?

A Hidden Wholeness

From *How, Then, Shall We Live?*

By Wayne Muller

There is in all visible things ... a hidden wholeness.

– Thomas Merton

Many spiritual traditions and practices begin with a single question: Who am I? The question is a persistent and intimate companion. The search for our essence, our identity, is fundamental; it is as necessary for individuals as for nations, tribes, races, and spiritual communities. Who am I? Am I spirit or flesh? Am I sacred or secular? Am I irrevocably shaped by the circumstances of my personal history, or am I still free to move and grow, to uncover a new and brighter path? Am I fragile or am I strong, am I broken or am I whole? When I listen deeply to my inner life, what do I hear? What is the substance of my soul, the core of my being? What is my true nature...?

Whether we call ourselves father or mother, lover or friend, weak or strong, Democrat or Republican, the naming of who we are will set the course of our life, determine what we love, how we live, and what gifts we will bring to the family of the earth.

If we are unsure of who we are, we will live tentatively, always guessing at where we should go and what we should do. But when we know who we are and feel comfortable with ourselves, we can live clearly and courageously. Bolstered by a strong sense of our own nature, assisted by reliable inner voices, we are guided toward what is necessary and right.

Jack Kornfield, a friend and respected teacher of Buddhism in the West, relates the following story:

There is a tribe in Africa where the birth date of a child is counted – not from when they're born, nor from when they are conceived – but from the day that the child was a thought in its mother's mind.

And when a woman decides that she will have a child, she goes off and sits under a tree, by herself, and she listens until she can hear the song of the child that wants to come. And after she's heard the song of this child, she comes back to the man who will be the child's father, and she teaches it to him. And then, when they make love to physically conceive the child, some of that time they sing the song of the child, as a way to invite it.

And then, when the mother is pregnant, the mother teaches that child's song to the midwives and the old women of the village, so that when the child is born, the old women and the people around her sing the child's song to welcome it. And then, as the child grows up, the other villagers are taught the child's song. If the child falls, or hurts its knee, someone picks it up and sings its song to it. Or perhaps the child does something wonderful, or goes through the rites of puberty – then as a way of honoring this person, the people of the village sing his or her song.

And it goes this way through their life – in marriage, the songs are sung, together. And finally, when this child is lying in bed, ready to die, all the villagers know his or her song, and they sing – for the last time – the song to that person.

What is our song? How do we name ourselves? Which word, when we speak it, reveals what is most deeply true about this inner voice, our deepest heart, our fundamental nature?

Every time I ask myself this question, it drives me a little deeper – and each time the answer reveals a little more about the complexion of my life. When I am “child of an alcoholic,” I feel small and afraid. When I am “therapist,” I feel caring, sometimes grateful, sometimes grandiose, sometimes overwhelmed. When I am “minister,” I feel peaceful, although at times self-important or pretentious. Each name brings a way of seeing and responding to the world; I walk differently, with a different gait, a different balance.

Practice: Who Am I?

During the course of one day, as you do your work, travel, speak with friends and co-workers, spend time with your family, cook, clean, get ready for bed – with every change of situation – allow the following question to arise gently: Who am I? As you are driving to work, ask: Who am I? Ask the question silently, and try to be aware of any ideas, words, feelings, or images that come forth in response. As you meet someone and speak with them, reflect on this question: Who am I in this conversation? Am I the leader, the learner, the teacher, the inquisitor, the failure, the collaborator, the light of the world? Who am I? Then when you move to another interaction, repeat the question: Who am I in this task: An expert? A performer? A child of spirit? A child in the sandbox? Who am I in this moment?

The point is to explore the breadth of who we are, and who we think we are, in our ordinary life. Watch how your sense of self changes. With each change, what do you notice? How do your words, hopes, dreams, or postures change when your identity shifts? Who, in each moment, do you think you are?

Notice which words or descriptions seem most accurate, which seem to reflect more precisely your sense of your deepest nature.

This week I will spend one or two days asking, “Who am I in this situation?” from eating a meal to taking out the garbage. I will write down what comes up for me on the pages below as I explore and expand my awareness of who I am.

Who am I?

Who am I? (continued)



Gardener

From *Prayers for Healing: 365 Blessings, Poems, & Meditations from Around the World*

By Dawna Markova, Edited by Maggie Oman

They say a child is born a blank slate to be molded,
a tabula rasa to be written upon.

But children come
like a plant with a rhizome – its food source,
the genetic coding for what flower it will become,
how often it will bear fruit,
what its artistry is;
all of that born into it with the seed.

The role of the gardener, then,
is simply to discern the manner of plant or child trying to emerge.

The role of the gardener, or parent then, is simply to ask,
“How do I help it grow
into what is in its roots?”



Workbook Studies for Week 2

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 1 Workbook:** Finish reading and responding to the Week 1 articles and exercises.
- ♥ **Week 2 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 2 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas and revelations for all your writings in class.

*The heart is like a garden. It can grow ...
Compassion or fear ... Resentment or love ...
What seeds will you plant there?*

- Buddha

Week 2

*The summit of happiness is reached when a
person is ready to be what he is.*

- Erasmus

What Is True About My Story?

This Week

This week we respectfully and with loving-kindness explore our story. What do I tell myself about my childhood? My family? My young adulthood? My relationships? My jobs? My mistakes and my successes? What I tell myself carries behind it emotion that is creative; what I believe my life to have been sets in motion what it will look like tomorrow. With heart and eyes wide open, this week we investigate our memories, thoughts, and beliefs.

*Your living is determined not so much by what
life brings to you as by the attitude you bring
to life; not so much by what happens to you as
by the way your mind looks at what happens.
Circumstances and situations do color life but
you have been given the mind to choose what
the color shall be.*

- John Homer Miller

*I like living. I have sometimes been wildly,
despairingly, acutely miserable, racked with
sorrow, but through it all I still know quite
certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing.*

- Agatha Christie

*The pen that writes your life story must be
held in your own hand.*

- Irene C. Kassorla



What Is True About My Story?

During my days I wear many hats and engage in countless roles: I am a solitary person, a friend, talker, listener, meat-eater or vegetarian, employer or employee, unemployed or retired, the person who empties the trash or the person who reminds the other that it's time to take the trash out. I am sometimes confident and sometimes unsure, peaceful or anxious, accepting or judgmental, motivated or procrastinating.

Who I believe myself to be sets the course of my life, because my beliefs become true for me. If I am unsure of who I am, I live tentatively, guessing at what I should do next, often trying to be what someone else wants me to be. But when I feel comfortable with myself, I live courageously, owning my life, saying yes to it!

When I think back to my childhood, which is where my story began, what do I believe is really true? What do I believe about my childhood, my teen years, my young adulthood, all the way up to my life today? What is true about the story I've told myself about who I am and how I got that way? What are old beliefs I simply adopted a long time ago because that's what everyone/someone else believed?

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about my story.

What is true and what isn't true about my story (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about my story (continued)



I Am Loved by Life!

From *Until Today!*

By Iyanla Vanzant

*Life will work for me when I realize ...
I am loved by life!*

Listen carefully, as if someone were whispering into your soul. There is something you must know. It is very important, no, it is imperative that you receive these words into the deepest core of your being. These words are essential to your very existence. They will feed, nurture and nourish you. They will support, assist and guide you. When all else fails, these words will give you the strength and courage you need to weather the storm and walk through the fire. These are simple words, yet they are very powerful. If you can accept them in the spirit in which they are given, you will be blessed. Receive these words – *Life loves you!*

Life loves you enough to live as you, to breathe through you, to express itself as you. Life loves you so much, it does everything in its power to stay in you, to be with you and to allow you to depend on it. Life is, at this very moment, totally and absolutely in love with you! Life wants to look like you, be like you, live as you because it respects and honors all that you are.

When life sees you coming, it gets excited! It can hardly contain itself! Life is ready to fill you up, spill over through you and experience the best it has to offer you, as you. If you were to ask life what it is about you that makes you so loveable, the answer would be simple. You are alive! That is all it takes to make you loved, loving, and loveable. Now isn't it good to know that you are loved?

Until today, you may not have realized just how much life loves you. You may have believed that life was not on your side. Just for today, be devoted to honoring, cherishing and enjoying life's love for you. Sit silently and ask life to fill you with its love.

Today I am devoted to allowing life to love me!

Name five ways in which you can feel that life loves you. Explain each.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Name five ways in which you would be willing to let life love you. How might your life change?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How to Activate Self-Love in Your Life

From *Pearls of Wisdom*

By Marci Shimoff

*Whatever you are doing, love yourself for doing it.
Whatever you are feeling, love yourself for feeling it.*

- Thaddeus Golas

The year was 1971, and “hot pants” were all the rage. In case you weren’t around for that particular fashion flurry, hot pants were three-inch-long shorts, usually in wild psychedelic colors and patterns, that barely covered your butt.

I was thirteen years old at the time, and the fact that my nickname was “Chubs” didn’t stop me from squeezing into my very own pair of bright pick hot pants. All the girls in my school were wearing them and – no surprise – I wanted to be one of the crowd.

The day of my hot pants debut, I walked home from school with my best friend, Chris. At my house, we decided to call our other friend, Roselyn, for a good old “who-likes-who/he-said-she-said” teenage gossip session. Chris dialed the number from the kitchen phone, and I went to my bedroom to use the extension there. As I picked up the receiver, I heard Roselyn say, “Can you *believe* Marci wore *hot pants* today – with *those* thighs?”

My face burning with shame, I silently put down the receiver. I took off the tiny pink shorts and stuck them at the very back of my closet where I would never have to see them again.

But I couldn’t get rid of Roselyn’s voice as easily. Every time I looked into the mirror, I heard, “Can you *believe* how fat you are?” Later, when I was nineteen and didn’t have a boyfriend, that same voice asked, “Can you *believe* what a loser you are?” And years after that, when I gave a talk and thought someone in the audience looked bored, the voice was still there: “Can you *believe* what a lousy speaker you are?”

It took years for me to hang up the phone on my inner critic. She was successfully employed full-time, pointing out every “unlovable” part of myself and keeping me from feeling unconditional love for myself.

If you're like everyone else I've ever met, you have the equivalent of a "hot pants" story in your life and your own version of self-judgment, both of which have put a lid on your experience of love and happiness.

Decades after this hot pants incident, I felt compelled to explore whether it was possible to experience unconditional love for ourselves and for everyone else. Could I actually love myself no matter what?

I had spent years studying and teaching self-esteem, and I'd realized that there's a big difference between self-esteem and self-love. Self-esteem is based on "loving myself, because ..." I'll love myself if I'm good enough, smart enough, pretty enough, do a good enough job, and so on. This is what I call "love for good reason," and the limitations of this are clear. What happens when I don't live up to the exacting standards that I hold? Then I plunge into self-judgment, close my heart, and feel unworthy of love. Not a great recipe for a happy life.

We place these same kinds of conditions on our love for other people, as well. We'll love them if we approve of them, agree with them, or share our values with them. If they don't meet our requirements, then we shut down love.

There is an alternative – what I call "love for no reason." This is the basis for true self-love and love for others. It's an unconditional love that doesn't depend on our behavior or on any other person or situation having to be a particular way. It's a state of being that we bring to all our experiences, rather than try to "get" from the world around us...

Since most of us are trained to base our love on reasons, we have some undoing to do. By understanding that there is a love that goes beyond reasons, you've made the first step.

Here are three simple practices that can help you love yourself no matter what. There are especially useful when you're having a rough time or being particularly judgmental with yourself.

1. Practice self-care: Most people aren't in the habit of taking good care of themselves and honoring their own needs. Luckily, beginning that process is actually quite simple: you start by becoming aware of those needs. Three times a day, stop what you're doing and ask yourself, *What's the most loving thing I can do for myself right now?* Then pay very close attention to the answer.

Sometimes the most loving thing you can do for yourself in the moment is to drink a glass of water or to walk outside and get some fresh air. Other times, it may be to clean out your email inbox so you feel less stressed or to call a good friend to get some support. The important thing is to make that question a part of your daily practice and then follow through with action.

2. Practice self-compassion and forgiveness: It can be far more difficult to forgive ourselves than it is to forgive others. We often give others the benefit of the doubt that we

don't give to ourselves. Developing self-love requires that you treat yourself kindly – as kindly as you would your neighbor or your friend.

If you're stuck in self-criticism, try thinking of yourself as a completely separate person. Ask yourself, *What would I do if I saw a friend hurting the way that I'm hurting?* This gentle approach is actually more effective for moving forward in life and “righting the wrongs” we're beating ourselves up for. Who has more energy – a discouraged, dejected person or a supported and loved one? Give yourself all the benefits of having a good friend – from the inside out.

3. Practice self-expression: Expressing yourself builds on the first practice: self-care. You can only express your needs and wants when you know what they are yourself. Once you know, the next step is to communicate them to others simply and clearly. For a lot of us, this is scary. The secret is to start small. Each day for the next month, ask for something or express yourself in a way that stretches you slightly but doesn't feel impossible. Each time you practice this, you're strengthening the neural pathways in your brain that support self-love.

As you do these practices, you may wonder whether you are being selfish – far from it! Growing in self-love is one of the most generous things you can do. Because our emotions are contagious, when you love and care for yourself, others around you *catch* your love. And isn't a world filled with love the kind we all want to live in?

This week I will practice self-care and write about my experiences here. I will be specific, so that each experience becomes clear in my mind.

This week I will practice self-compassion and forgiveness and write about them here. Once again I will be specific, so that each experience becomes clear in my mind.

This week I will practice self-expression. Again I will be specific. In what ways did I practice self-expression? What did it look like/feel like?

Love Is in the Being

From *The Book of Awakening*

By Mark Nepo

*The center I once glimpsed is all around me,
a landscape I now live in, and I will not
pretend any more.*

*If those I love can't recognize me
with my soul out in the open,
I will no longer retreat
and show what is familiar.*

You do not have to do anything to be loved. You do not have to perform, or achieve, or earn a merit badge, or be witnessed doing good. It has taken me almost half a century to learn and believe this. It is my work to this day. For our messages to the contrary are deep.

Growing up, I heard my father say a thousand times, “Don’t tell me how hard you try, just show me what you accomplish.” But my life has shown me that the opposite is true. In my heart, where the spirit of the world really comes alive, it doesn’t matter what I accomplish. The only thing that matters is how deeply I try. For out of this trying comes sincerity and love.

This has led me to another realization of heart: Being who we are does not let others down. For much of my adult life, I’ve heard the message, “You must consider others,” offered as a caution against following your heart because it might upset others. Certainly, true compassion begins with the consideration of others, but the displeasure of others is no reason to muffle your love.

You do not have to do anything to be loved, and being who you are does not let others down. This needs to be repeated, and often. Simply be who you are, and love what is before you.

- *Center yourself, and with each breath, put aside your accomplishments.*
- *Breathe deeply, and with each breath, put aside the things you haven’t accomplished.*
- *Sit in the center of your being without these uniforms of goodness and know that you are as beautiful as a mountain or a river.*

At least once this week I will practice the “Centering” exercise, putting aside my accomplishments, as well as everything I haven’t accomplished. I will take time to just *be*, knowing I am quite good enough. I will write about my feelings and insights here.



Light

From *A Course in Miracles*

We practice coming nearer
to the light in us today.

We take our wandering thoughts,
and gently bring them back
to where they fall in line
with all the thoughts
we share with God.

We will not let them stray.

We let the light within our minds
direct them to come home.



Workbook Studies for Week 3

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 3 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 3 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas and revelations for all your writings in class.

Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.

- William Jennings Bryan

Week 3

What Is True About My Choices?

The path to our destination is not always a straight one. We go down the wrong road, we get lost, we turn back. Maybe it doesn't matter which road we embark on. Maybe what matters is that we embark.

- Barbara Hall

This Week

This week looks at the amazing power of the choices we make. What we think is a passing thought is actually setting into motion the experiences of our tomorrows. The good news is, if there is an area of our life that could use some uplifting, we know that by changing our mind about it, we are beginning the process of changing our life!

Our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

- Barbara Geraci

A life lived of choice is a life of conscious action. A life lived of chance is a life of unconscious creation.

- Neale Donald Walsh

The more we witness our emotional reactions and understand how they work, the easier it is to refrain.

- Pema Chodron



What Is True About My Choices?

My choices are creative. Whatever I think and feel creates my experiences. This is both humbling and empowering. I am left with a strong need to take responsibility for my life. If there is an area of my life that doesn't feel good, I know it's up to me to change my thinking about it. Knowing what is true about my choices is my ticket to freedom!

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about my choices.

What is true and what isn't true about my choices (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about my choices (continued)



Awareness of Choices

From *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*

By Deepak Chopra

Whether you like it or not, everything that is happening at this moment is a result of the choices you've made in the past. Unfortunately, a lot of us make choices unconsciously, and therefore we don't think they are choices – and yet, they are.

If I were to insult you, you would most likely make the choice of being offended. If I were to pay you a compliment, you would most likely make the choice of being pleased or flattered. But think about it: it's still a choice.

I could offend you and I could insult you, and you could make the choice of not being offended. I could pay you a compliment and you could make the choice of not letting that flatter you either.

In other words, most of us – even though we are infinite choice-makers – have become bundles of conditioned reflexes that are constantly being triggered by people and circumstances into predictable outcomes of behavior. These conditioned reflexes are like Pavlovian conditioning. Pavlov is famous for demonstrating that if you give a dog something to eat every time you ring a bell, soon the dog starts to salivate when you just ring the bell, because it has associated one stimulus with the other.

Most of us, as a result of conditioning, have repetitious and predictable responses to the stimuli in our environment. Our reactions seem to be automatically triggered by people and circumstances, and we forget that these are still choices that we are making in every moment of our existence. We are simply making these choices unconsciously.

If you step back for a moment and witness the choices you are making as you make those choices, then in just this act of witnessing, you take the whole process from the unconscious realm into the conscious realm. This procedure of conscious choice-making and witnessing is very empowering.

When you make any choice – any choice at all – you can ask yourself two things: First of all, “What are the consequences of this choice that I'm making?” In your heart you will immediately know what these are. Secondly, “Will this choice that I'm making now bring happiness to me and to those around me?” If the answer is yes, then go ahead with that choice. If the answer is no, if that choice brings distress either to you or to those around you, then don't make that choice. It's as simple as that.

There is only one choice, out of the infinity of choices available in every second, that will create happiness for you as well as those around you. And when you make that one choice, it will result in a form of behavior that is called spontaneous right action. Spontaneous right action is the right action at the right moment. It's the right response to every situation as it happens. It's the action that nourishes you and everyone else who is influenced by that action.

There is a very interesting mechanism that the universe has to help you make spontaneously correct choices. The mechanism has to do with sensations in your body. Your body experiences two kinds of sensations: one is a sensation of comfort, the other is a sensation of discomfort. At the moment you consciously make a choice, pay attention to your body and ask your body, "If I make this choice, what happens?" If your body sends a message of comfort, that's the right choice. If your body sends a message of discomfort, then it's not the appropriate choice.

For some people the message of comfort and discomfort is in the area of the solar plexus, but for most people it's in the area of the heart. Consciously put your attention in the heart and ask your heart what to do. Then wait for the response – a physical response in the form of a sensation. It may be the faintest level of feeling – but it's there, in your body.

Only the heart knows the correct answer. Most people think the heart is mushy and sentimental. But it's not. The heart is intuitive; it's holistic, it's contextual, it's relational. It doesn't have a win-lose orientation. It taps into the cosmic computer – the field of pure potentiality, pure knowledge, and infinite organizing power – and takes everything into account. At times it may not even seem rational, but the heart has a computing ability that is far more accurate and far more precise than anything within the limits of rational thought...

1. Today I will witness the choices I make in each moment. And in the mere witnessing of these choices, I will bring them to my conscious awareness. I will know that the best way to prepare for any moment in the future is to be fully conscious in the present.
2. Whenever I make a choice, I will ask myself two questions: "What are the consequences of this choice that I'm making?" and "Will this choice bring fulfillment and happiness to me and also to those who are affected by this choice?"
3. I will then ask my heart for guidance and be guided by its message of comfort or discomfort. If the choice feels comfortable, I will plunge ahead with abandon. If the choice feels uncomfortable, I will pause and see the consequences of my action with my inner vision. This guidance will enable me to make spontaneously correct choices for myself and for all those around me.

This week I will keep a log of at least 10 choices that I brought into my conscious awareness, using the steps above. I will include: 1) a description of each choice, 2) how

I used the above steps to make spontaneously correct choices for myself and for all those around me, and 3) the results I experienced.

Choice #1:

Choice #2:

Ten choices I brought into my conscious awareness (continued)

Choice #3:

Choice #4:

Ten choices I brought into my conscious awareness (continued)

Choice #5:

Choice #6:

Ten choices I brought into my conscious awareness (continued)

Choice #7:

Choice #8:

Ten choices I brought into my conscious awareness (continued)

Choice #9:

Choice #10:

What I learned from this process about what is true about my choices is ...

She Missed a Step, Too

From *Choices*

By Melody Beattie

It happened in a flurry, as accidents sometimes do. One minute she was stepping out of the shower. In the next moment, the phone and doorbell rang – both at the same time. Carol grabbed her robe and headed for the stairs leading to the main level of her apartment. That dang yipping dog jumped under her foot. She wasn't paying attention. Going too fast. Whoops. She missed a step. Lost her balance. Tumbled all the way down.

For a moment she was stunned. It had all happened so quickly. She tried to stand up. She couldn't. She looked at her leg.

She knew it was broken.

God, it really hurt.

Two days later, the hospital released her and sent her home with a huge bottle of pain medication and orders to rest. She lay on the couch in the living room, glaring at the foot of the stairs.

I've really hit bottom in my life, she thought. She looked at the bottle of pain pills. Take one or two every six hours as needed. She swallowed two and considered a third. *Why do bad things all happen at once?* she wondered, waiting for the medication to kick in. She had waited seven years for Michael to come around. He had come around – for a while. Then he'd go back to his ex-wife. Then he'd come back to her.

It was an unfulfilling revolving door.

So was the treatment center where he frequently went to deal with his recurring addiction to coke.

How stupid have I been to wait around pathetically all those years? What was I thinking of? We had some good times, but all the guy brought me was misery and pain. She looked at her leg. Kind of like that.

She had finally broken it off three months ago. *Now he's gone. For good. And I'm stuck here, still in pain, still waiting, still alone.*

Two weeks passed, then three. Money was tight. Her leg still hurt. The break had been severe. The doctor had supplied her with all the pain medication she needed. It was so

tempting to just lie on the couch and sink into euphoria. The pills helped the throbbing in her leg. And they numbed the pain in her heart.

She reached for another pill. A quiet voice said, *Watch out. You're getting addicted, too.*

For two more days, Carol lay there gobbling pain pills like they were M&M's. It was a Wednesday, when she got up to hobble on crutches to the refrigerator to get a soda, that she realized she couldn't remember the last time her mind had been clear. She had been in a medicated stupor ever since the accident.

If I keep going this way, I'll end up in treatment, too, she thought, heading for the phone. *There must be another way. My leg really hurts, but I can't keep gobbling these pills.*

She called her doctor.

The following Monday she took a taxi to an address her doctor gave her. It was a clinic that helped people non-chemically manage physical pain. She went to the groups and therapy sessions. She began to learn how to live with the pain and relax herself without medication, so it didn't hurt as much. She was still in a cast. Her leg still hurt. She had still wasted the last seven years of her life.

And all it had led to was learning to manage the pain.

The clinic she attended was seven days long, an outpatient one. Follow-up was available for several months. Carol went back once or twice a week, as needed, for continued help.

It was there she met Jason. He had attended a pain clinic, too. He was a mountain climber, and on his last climb he had injured his back.

"Let's go out for dinner and talk about how good life can be when you're not in pain," he said.

Carol agreed.

Sixteen months later, Carol stepped out of the shower, dried herself off, put on her robe, got dressed, and then carefully went down the stairs. She didn't want to slip today. She was marrying Jason in four hours.

"How'd you two meet?" an aunt asked at the reception following the wedding.

Carol was silent for a moment, wondering what to say. Choosing to end an unfulfilling relationship, finally after all those years. Not paying attention. Falling down the steps. That dang yipping dog. Breaking her leg. Taking too much medication for too much pain. Deciding to stop taking it. Needing help. Choosing to follow through with that plan.

"A lot of very strange twists of fate," she finally said. "I'll tell you all about it someday."

Sometimes we can miss a step and things still work out if we stay present for all the steps that come after that.

Some people spend years looking for the magic everywhere they go. Often they end up frustrated and disappointed because they miss the beauty of what's there. Stop looking so hard. Mind your own business. Pay attention to each decision and detail in your life. Be present for each moment. Let the magic come to you.

Remember the words of Dr. Seuss in *Oh, the Places You Will Go?*

“Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So ... Get on your way.”

Anything can happen. Anything at all.

I remember a time in my life when I made a choice that changed my life. I will write about it here.

What did that situation teach me?

What is it about that situation that causes me to be grateful today?

Every Act is Creative

From *Spiritual Liberation*

By Michael Bernard Beckwith

The canvas of our life is very large and spacious. Your life circumstances are painted on this canvas in colors you have chosen through your conscious or unconscious use of the creative process. It is possible to turn what appear to be mundane activities – sweeping the street, cooking, washing dishes, changing diapers, mowing the lawn – into art forms. It was St. Augustine who said that you can identify a saintly being by the way they pick up an ordinary object, such as a pen. Spiritual attunement causes us to touch everything with ultimate respect, as an act of divine love and gratitude. Each of us is a candidate for living in such a precious way, for living such an elevated life.

These illuminating words of one of the world's most creative spirits, Albert Einstein, underscore the value of your contribution to the world: "It can easily be seen that all the valuable achievements, material and spiritual, which we receive from society have been brought about in the course of countless generations by creative individuals. Without creative personalities able to think and judge independently, the upward development is as unthinkable as the development of the individual personality without the nourishing soil of the community."

In the consciousness of the Absolute there is no thought or act that is not creative. Indigenous cultures have always understood this. To this day, through prayer and ritual, they broadcast their call to the Spirit of Creativity present in all things. The Buddhist teaching of mindfulness powerfully illustrates how creativity courses through even the most normal, everyday activities. For example, the practice of mindful walking makes each step a creative act. As Ari Bloomekatz noted in the *L. A. Times* article, "The Seven Miracles of Mindfulness" on September 30, 2007, the revered Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, "If we take steps without anxiety, in peace and joy, then we will cause a flower to bloom on the earth with every step..."

The Spirit of the living God is knocking at the door of your heart, reminding you that you are an exquisite, precious, and powerful being. Shine! Sing! Be bold enough to articulate what you are sensing, feeling, and knowing. Now is the time for you to partner with that immense power. Allow the tidal wave of the divine inspiration to wash over you and express in, through and as you. Consciously and confidently enter the sacred process of co-creation, because That which expresses as you does not happen through anyone else in quite the same way. Become a master of your own divine, radiant creative expression.

Affirmation

I attune myself to the creative impulse that indwells me and seeks expression through me. I live to express my essential creativeness by performing every act mindfully, with the attentiveness of the artist that I am. My life is my canvas, and I cover it in acts of beauty, kindness, generosity, and authentic self-expression.

As an exquisite, precious, and powerful being, what do I choose to create in my life today by the power of my choices?



Choosing Love

From *Handle with Prayer*

By Alan Cohen

I ask for help with anything that is not working in my life.
I let go of trying to force my way, and open to God's answer.

Even though I have made decisions that have hurt me,
You have been present – loving and supporting me.

Help me to keep You foremost in my mind and heart
as I navigate my way through this world with Your guidance.

I have learned through sorrow,
and now I wish to learn through joy.

I am ready to live a life in harmony with Your will of peace.



Workbook Studies for Week 4

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 4 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 4 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas, and revelations for all your writings in class.

An old belief is like an old shoe. We so value its comfort that we fail to notice the hole in it.

- Robert Brault

Week 4

What Is True About My Beliefs?

A belief system is nothing more than a thought you've thought over and over again. It's just a repeated thought, like a habit is a repeated piece of behavior.

- Wayne Dyer

This Week

This week we seek to understand the beliefs behind the choices we make. Our beliefs are filled with the opinions of our family, teachers, society, and even television commercials! This week we look at what is really true for *us* – no one else. As we see the reality of where our current beliefs have brought us, we explore our willingness to adopt new beliefs.

That which has been believed by everyone, always and everywhere, has every chance of being false.

- Paul Valery

Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.

- William James

First thing every morning before you arise say out loud, "I believe," three times.

- Norman Vincent Peale



What Is True About My Beliefs?

My beliefs are the creative seeds that grow into my life experiences. Therefore, if there is a part of my world that isn't exactly what I want, I can examine old beliefs in that area. Knowing that believing in myself is the key to a happy, fulfilled life, I am willing to change those old beliefs and replace them with new ones such as: "I am strong!" "I am capable!" "I am creative!" "I am wise!" "I am abundant!" "I am healthy!" "I am worthy!" "I am happy!" My world is sure to change with these new beliefs!

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about my beliefs.

What is true and what isn't true about my beliefs (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about my beliefs (continued)



Placebos: The Belief Effect

From *The Biology of Belief*

By Bruce Lipton

Every medical student learns, at least in passing, that the mind can affect the body. They learn that some people get better when they *believe* (falsely) they are getting medicine. When patients get better by ingesting a sugar pill, medicine defines it as the *placebo effect*. My friend Rob Williams, founder of PSYCHE-K, an energy-based psychological treatment system, suggests that it would be more appropriate to refer to it as the *perception effect*. I call it the *belief effect* to stress that our perceptions, whether they are accurate or inaccurate, equally impact our behavior and our bodies...

A Baylor School of Medicine Study, published in 2002 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* evaluated surgery for patients with severe, debilitating knee pain. (Moseley, et al, 2002) The lead author of the study, Dr. Bruce Moseley, “knew” that knee surgery helped his patients: “All good surgeons know there is no placebo effect in surgery.” But Moseley was trying to figure out which part of the surgery was giving his patients relief. The patients in the study were divided into three groups. Moseley shaved the damaged cartilage in the knee of one group. For another group, he flushed out the knee joint, removing material thought to be causing the inflammatory effect. Both of these constitute standard treatment for arthritic knees. The third group got “fake” surgery. The patient was sedated, Moseley made three standard incisions and then talked and acted just as he would have during a real surgery – he even splashed salt water to simulate the sound of the knee-washing procedure. After 40 minutes, Moseley sewed up the incisions as if he had done the surgery. All three groups were prescribed the same postoperative care, which included an exercise program.

The results were shocking. Yes, the groups who received surgery, as expected, improved. But the placebo group improved just as much as the other two groups! Despite the fact that there are 650,000 surgeries yearly for arthritic knees, at a cost of about \$5,000 each. The results were clear to Moseley: “My skill as a surgeon had no benefit on these patients. The entire benefit of surgery for osteoarthritis of the knee was the placebo effect.” Television news programs graphically illustrated the stunning results. Footage showed members of the placebo group walking and playing basketball, in short doing things they reported they could not do before their “surgery.” The placebo patients didn’t find out for two years that they had gotten fake surgery. One member of the placebo group, Tim Perez, who had to walk with a cane before the surgery, is now able to play basketball with his grandchildren. He summed up the theme of his book when he told the Discovery Health Channel: “In this world anything is possible when you put your mind to it. I know that your mind can work miracles...”

Nocebos: The Power of Negative Beliefs

While many in the medical profession are aware of the placebo effect, few have considered its implications for self-healing. If positive thinking can pull you out of depression and heal a damaged knee, consider what negative thinking can do in your life. When the mind, through positive suggestions improves health, it is referred to as the placebo effect. Conversely, when the same mind is engaged in negative suggestions that can damage health the negative effects are referred to as the nocebo effect.

In medicine, the nocebo effect can be as powerful as the placebo effect, a fact you should keep in mind every time you step into a doctor's office. By their words and demeanor, physicians can convey hope-deflating messages to their patients ...

I have cited the Discovery Health Channel's 2003 program "Placebo: Mind Over Medicine" in this chapter because it is a good compendium of some of medicine's most interesting cases. One of its more poignant segments featured a Nashville physician, Clifton Meador, who has been reflecting on the potential power of the nocebo effect for 30 years. In 1974 Meador had a patient, Sam Londe, a retired shoe salesman suffering from cancer of the esophagus, a condition that was at the time considered 100 percent fatal. Londe was treated for that cancer, but everyone in the medical community "knew" that his esophageal cancer would recur. So it was no surprise when Londe died a few weeks after his diagnosis.

The surprise came after Londe's death when an autopsy found very little cancer in his body, certainly not enough to kill him. There were a couple of spots in the liver and one in the lung, but there was no trace of the esophageal cancer that everyone thought had killed him. Meador told the Discovery Health Channel: "He died with cancer, but not from cancer." What did Londe die of if not esophageal cancer? Had he died because he believed he was going to die? The case still haunts Meador three decades after Londe's death: "I thought he had cancer. He thought he had cancer. Everybody around him thought he had cancer ... did I remove hope in some way?" Troublesome nocebo cases suggest that physicians, parents, and teachers can remove hope by programming you to believe you are powerless...

Your beliefs act like filters on a camera, changing how you see the world. And our biology adapts to those beliefs. When we truly recognize that our beliefs are that powerful, we hold the key to freedom. While we cannot readily change the codes of our genetic blueprints, we can change our minds and, in the process, switch the blueprints used to express our genetic potential...

Learning how to harness your mind to promote growth is the secret of life, which is why I called this book *The Biology of Belief*. Of course the secret of life is not a secret at all. Teachers like Buddha and Jesus have been telling us the same story for millennia. Now science is pointing in the same direction. It is not our genes but our beliefs that control our lives...

There is nothing wrong with going through life wearing the proverbial rose-colored glasses. In fact, those rose-colored glasses are necessary for your cells to thrive. Positive thoughts are a biological mandate for a happy, healthy life. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

*Your beliefs become your thoughts
Your thoughts become your words
Your words become your actions
Your actions become your habits
Your habits become your values
Your values become your destiny.*

How hard or easy is it for me to maintain positive thoughts?

What helps me remember to look for what's right instead of what's wrong?

What are my triggers, causing me to forget the power of optimism?

What do I do to help me get back on track?

What do I believe about the Placebo Effect?

What do I believe about the Nocebo Effect?

As I investigate the power of belief and how it has played a major role in my life, I do so with acceptance and curiosity, without self-judgment. I will now choose one of my beliefs (positive or negative) and follow its route into my life using the path Gandhi set before me:

*Your beliefs become your thoughts
Your thoughts become your words
Your words become your actions
Your actions become your habits
Your habits become your values
Your values become your destiny.*

Where did this particular belief become my thought?

In what way did that thought become my words?

How did my actions follow?

How did it become a habit?

How did it show up in my values?

As my values became my destiny, how has it shown up in my life today?

**Now that I know the power of my beliefs, do I choose to keep this belief or change it?
Why?**

What are my next steps?

Fishbowl to Bathtub

From *The Dragon Doesn't Live Here Anymore*

By Alan Cohen

One morning, Eve decided it was time to clean her fishbowl. Unable to find a container in which to put her two goldfish, Yin and Yang, while the bowl was being cleaned, Eve let about two inches of water into her bathtub, and lovingly placed the little creatures there. When she finished scrubbing the bowl and putting the ceramic deep-sea diver in a new position, Eve returned to find Yin and Yang engaged in a very thought-provoking behavior: the two goldfish were swimming around in one little corner of the bathtub, in a circle no bigger than the fishbowl!

In many ways, we humans are like the goldfish. We develop our patterns, our habits, and our taught lifestyles (which we have adopted from families, friends, and television commercials), and then, when we have the chance to go beyond them to discover a new and freer dimension, we prefer to remain in our tiny corner of the world, though it offers us little joy, a lot of anxiety, and no expansiveness.

Most people are sleepwalking. Many wander through life in a sort of semiconscious state, having some idea of what they do, but not really sure of why they are doing it. Mostly, we do what other people do, for we have made gods of popular opinions, beliefs, and actions. We worship the masses instead of the mass. For a long time, I depended on the world to tell me who I was and what to do. After wandering through my life like this for years, I realized that this kind of unchosen living just doesn't work.

When we live in an attempt to fulfill the dreams and desires of others, we may (for a while) succeed in convincing ourselves that we are happy, but sooner or later we must admit that we have our own calling in life. I know a young man who suffered through medical school because his parents wanted him to be a doctor, and they had almost convinced him that was what he wanted, too. He stayed in medical school for a while, mostly out of guilt and fear, for his father had taken out a second mortgage on their house in order to buy his son's way into an accredited school. But, alas, how long can one live a lie? The young man eventually became ill, quit the school, and got a job teaching science in the Virgin Islands, a position in which he now feels comfortable and fulfilled...

A while back, I quit a well-paying government job with a certain amount of power and I took a job in the Magic Garden Health Food restaurant. One day, while shopping in Foodtown, I ran into Mrs. Rothman (an old friend of my mother), somewhere between the cauliflower and the eggplant. When I told her of my job change, she asked me, "So, are you happy now?" "I am, Mrs. Rothman," I reported sincerely. "I love my work; I feel creative and alive; I enjoy the people I work with; I'm free of the pressures of working for the government; I'm happier than I've ever been!"

“Don’t worry, dear,” she told me, with a consoling look on her brow – “you’ll find yourself.”

The irony, of course, was that I was already found. And we are all already found, but it is each of us that must find our own self, and it is only within our own heart that we can know it. Once we align ourselves with a direction from within, no one in the world can convince us otherwise, for our Source of acknowledgment is far more powerful than any that the world could offer or any challenge the world could pose...

Once we begin to see that we can be anything we want to be, our limits reveal themselves to be as illusory as the glass of a fishbowl that doesn’t exist.

It’s time to dream, to see past my self-imposed limitations! Below I will write about five things I want to be, do, or have. What does my life look like being, doing, or having them?

1.

Five things I want to be, do, or have (continued)

2.

3.

Five things I want to be, do, or have (continued)

4.

5.

What next steps might I take toward manifesting at least one of these dreams?

The Seed

From *The Answer is You*

By Michael Bernard Beckwith

Choice is a function of awareness. When we choose to evolve our mindsets and heart-sets then self-empowerment, love, abundance, joy, freedom – all that seems just beyond our grasp or that seems to slip between our fingers – are tapped from within and released into our experience. We do not exist to aggressively get; we are here to tenderly let that which is within us harmoniously flow into our outer life.

Will you give consent to making a deeper commitment to discover That which has been implanted within you, That which awaits the ripe conditions to leap into full expression as you? This is a courageous and vital commitment, because when the proper conditions are met, who you are fully expresses beyond the ego's to-do list and purposes designed for its glorification. When you wake up it no longer matters who your parents are, how many who's who volumes you appear in, if you've been born into abject poverty or if you are physically challenged. All of that pales into comparison to the emergence of the Perfect Idea that is latent within you.

To make this more visceral, let's say that right now you have in your pocket a rosebush seed that you've forgotten about. Then one day while doing your laundry it falls out of your pocket and onto the floor. Out of curiosity you plant it in a small container. After it grows roots and sprouts, you transplant it into your garden. With the proper conditions of sunlight, water, and plant food, what started out as a tiny seed, then became a sprout, matures into a rosebush with exquisite blossoms. Obviously, within that seed the perfect pattern of a rosebush existed all along.

How will I tend to the seed of my own perfection today?

When I look into the mirror, how will I think kindly of the face that looks back at me, choosing to believe that I am just as glorious as an exquisite rose?

How will I watch what I say to myself – and about myself – as I move through my day, watering the seed of my own inner beauty with self-love and acceptance?



I Am One with Life

From *Creative Ideas*

By Ernest Holmes

Regardless of what my problem may be, or in what direction I need guidance,
I know that today I walk in a full understanding of my oneness with God.

God is at the center of my being,
and from this center I receive inspiration
which governs my every thought and every act with certainty, love, and peace.

My guidance is assured
as I accept the all-knowing creative action of God through what I am.
I know exactly what to do and how to do it
for the establishing of right action for myself and all concerned in my life.

God has no problems,
and as I am an expression and creation of God,
all difficulties are now removed from my experience.



Workbook Studies for Week 5

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 5 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 5 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas and revelations for all your writings in class.

Whatever you accept into your mind has reality for you. It is your acceptance of it that makes it real. Release your mind, and you will look upon a world released.

- A Course In Miracles

Week 5

What Is True About My Mind?

The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven.

- John Milton

This Week

This week a look at our magnificent human mind is explored. More than our intellect and reasoning powers, our mind holds the key to our perceptions of the world and our reactions to the events of our daily lives. Understanding our mind leads to understanding why we think the way we think and do what we do.

Here in your mind you have complete privacy. Here there's no difference between what is and what could be.

- Chuck Palahniuk

The human mind is a channel through which things-to-be are coming into the realm of things-that-are.

- Henry Ford

Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



What Is True About My Mind?

My mind is like a storage room filled with many articles: thoughts, beliefs, memories, emotions, ego, personal will, conscious mind, subconscious mind – whew, no wonder I sometimes get confused! Understanding how my beautiful mind works leads me down the road to balance and harmony in my life because after all, I am owner of the storage room, and I get to decide what to keep and what to let go.

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about my mind.

What is true and what isn't true about my mind (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about my mind (continued)



Rising Above Thought

From *The Power of Now*

By Eckhart Tolle

Isn't thinking essential in order to survive in this world?

Your mind is an instrument, a tool. It is there to be used for a specific task, and when the task is completed, you lay it down. As it is, I would say about 80 to 90 percent of most people's thinking is not only repetitive and useless, but because of its dysfunctional and often negative nature, much of it is also harmful. Observe your mind and you will find this to be true. It causes a serious leakage of vital energy.

This kind of compulsive thinking is actually an addiction. What characterizes an addiction? Quite simply this: you no longer feel that you have a choice to stop. It seems stronger than you. It also gives you a false sense of pleasure, pleasure that invariably turns into pain.

Why should we be addicted to thinking?

Because you are identified with it, which means that you derive your sense of self from the content and activity of your mind. Because you believe that you would cease to be if you stopped thinking. As you grow up, you form a mental image of who you are, based on your personal and cultural conditioning. We may call this phantom self the ego. It consists of mind activity and can only be kept going through constant thinking. The term *ego* means different things to different people, but when I use it here it means a false self, created by unconscious identification with the mind.

To the ego, the present moment hardly exists. Only past and future are considered important. This total reversal of the truth accounts for the fact that in the ego mode the mind is so dysfunctional. It is always concerned with keeping the past alive, because without it – who are you? It constantly projects itself into the future to ensure its continued survival and to seek some kind of release or fulfillment there. It says: "One day, when this, that, or the other happens, I am going to be okay, happy, at peace." Even when the ego seems to be concerned with the present, it is not the present that it sees: It misperceives it completely because it looks at it through the eyes of the past. Or it reduces the present to the means to an end, an end that always lies in the mind-projected future. Observe your mind and you'll see how this works.

Right now I will take a few moments to be quiet, close my eyes, and without judgment, notice the thoughts that surface. I will jot them down here:

Notice the thoughts that surface (continued)

Do any of these thoughts have to do with the past? Which ones?

Do any of them have to do with the future?

Do any of them have to do with the present moment?

Are these thoughts mostly negative or mostly positive?

the voice inside your head

From *The Untethered Soul*

By Michael Singer

“Shoot, I can’t remember her name. What is her name? Darn, here she comes. What is it ... Sally ... Sue? She just told me yesterday. What’s the matter with me? This is going to be embarrassing.”

In case you haven’t noticed, you have a mental dialogue going on inside your head that never stops. It just keeps going and going. Have you ever wondered why it talks in there? How does it decide what to say and when to say it? How much of what it says turns out to be true? How much of what it says is even important? And if right now you are hearing, “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I don’t have any voice inside my head!” – that’s the voice we’re talking about.

If you’re smart, you’ll take the time to step back, examine this voice, and get to know it better. The problem is, you’re too close to be objective. You have to step way back and watch it converse. While you’re driving, you hear internal conversations like,

“Wasn’t I supposed to call Fred? I should have. Oh my God, I can’t believe I forgot! He’s going to be so mad. He may never talk to me again. Maybe I should stop and call him right now. No. I don’t want to stop the car right now...”

Notice that the voice takes both sides of the conversation. It doesn’t care which side it takes, just as long as it gets to keep on talking. When you’re tired and trying to sleep, it’s the voice inside your head that says,

“What am I doing? I can’t go to sleep yet. I forgot to call Fred. I remembered in the car but I didn’t call. If I don’t call now ... oh wait, it’s too late. I shouldn’t call him now. I don’t even know why I thought about it. I need to fall asleep. Oh shoot, now I can’t fall asleep. I’m not tired anymore. But I have a big day tomorrow, and I have to get up early.”

No wonder you can’t sleep! Why do you even tolerate that voice talking to you all the time? Even if what it’s saying is soothing and nice, it’s still disturbing everything you’re doing...

The best way to free yourself from this incessant chatter is to step back and view it objectively. Just view the voice as a vocalizing mechanism that is capable of making it appear like someone is in there talking to you. Don’t think about it; just notice it. No matter what the voice is saying, it’s all the same. It doesn’t matter if it’s saying nice things or mean things, worldly things or spiritual things. It doesn’t matter because it’s still just a

voice talking inside your head. In fact, the only way to get your distance from this voice is to stop differentiating what it's saying. Stop feeling that one thing it says is you and the other thing it says is not you. If you're hearing it talk, it's obviously not you. You are the one who hears the voice. You are the one who notices that it's talking.

You do hear it when it talks, don't you? Make it say "hello" right now. Say it over and over a few times. Now shout it inside! Can you hear yourself saying "hello" inside? Of course you can. There is a voice talking, and there is you who notices the talking. The problem is that it's easy to notice the voice saying "hello," but it's difficult to see that no matter what the voice says, it is still just a voice talking and you listening. There is absolutely nothing that voice can say that is more you than anything else it says. Suppose you were looking at three objects – a flowerpot, a photograph, and a book – and were then asked, "Which of these objects is you?" You'd say, "None of them! I'm the one who's looking at what you're putting in front of me. It doesn't matter what you put in front of me, it's always going to be me looking at it." You see, it's an act of a subject perceiving various objects. This is also true of hearing the voice inside. It doesn't make any difference what it's saying, you are the one who is aware of it. As long as you think that one thing it's saying is you, but the other thing it's saying is not you, you've lost your objectivity. You may want to think of yourself as the part that says the nice things, but that's still the voice talking. You may like what it says, but it's not you.

There is nothing more important to true growth than realizing that you are not the voice of the mind – you are the one who hears it. If you don't understand this, you will try to figure out which of the many things the voice says is really you. People go through so many changes in the name of "trying to find myself." They want to discover which of these voices, which of these aspects of their personality, is who they really are. The answer is simple: none of them.

I will experiment with the practices in this article, listening to the voice inside my head and then making it talk. I'll write about this experience here:

Listening to the voice inside my head practice (continued)

If I am not the voice inside my head, what do I believe that voice to be?

If I am not the voice inside my head, who do I believe myself to be?

Have Insight

From *Just One Thing*

By Rick Hanson

By *insight*, I mean understanding yourself, particularly how your mind constructs your reactions to things.

Let's say I've just come home from a frazzling day of work, and my wife gives me a hug and then asks in passing, "Did you get any eggs?" (which we had not discussed; I hadn't known we needed any) – and I get irritated, tense in my body, and a little sad. What's happening here?

Her casual, neutral question about the eggs, the *stimulus* – led to a *response* of irritation, tension, and sadness due to several factors at work in my mind: stress, a sensitivity to possible criticism (that I had forgotten the eggs) from growing up with a fault-finding (although very loving) mother, and my guilt about not doing enough housework. If those factors disappeared, so would my upset.

Recall a moderately irritating or worrying situation of your own; what were your reactions to it, and *why* were you reacting that way? Consider stress, fatigue, your temperament, how you interpret certain events, your history with the others involved, and the impact of your childhood.

As with everybody else, your reactions come from *causes* inside your mind. Therefore, if you can change the causes, you can change your reactions for the better:

- Seeing, in the moment, how your mind has colored your perceptions and turbocharged your emotions can transform your reactions – sometimes rapidly and dramatically, like waking up from a bad dream.
- Over time, you can gradually alter or get better control over the mental factors that wear on your well-being, relationships, and effectiveness.

How

Begin by shifting attention away from the external causes of your reactions – like what someone said to you – and toward the causes *inside your own mind*, such as how you interpret what was said, attribute intentions to the speaker, or feel especially prickly because of your history with that person.

The mind is like a great mansion, with cozy dens, dusty closets, and dank cellars. Insight explores it, opening closed doors and making sense of what it finds: sometimes a treasure chest, sometimes smelly old shoes – though truly, it's usually treasure, including your natural goodness, sincere efforts, and loving kindness.

Nonetheless, it can feel scary to look around (especially in those cellars); these suggestions could help you keep going:

- Remember the benefits of insight. For example, I'm very independent, so I remind myself that the main forces controlling me are actually inside my own head (e.g. beliefs left over from childhood); understanding them reduces their power over me.
- Bring to mind the feeling of being with someone who cares about you – like a friend walking with you down a dark street. As they say in AA: "The mind is a dangerous neighborhood; don't go in alone."
- Regard what you find without making it good or bad. It's not *you*. It's only a sensation, feeling, thought, or want arising in a room in your mind. Try to be accepting rather than self-critical, compassionate rather than shaming. Everybody, me included, has wild stuff in the mind; it's a jungle in there!

Drawing on the resources in the bullet points just above, look around inside your mind. Now sense beneath the surface and ask yourself one or more of these questions:

- What is softer – such as hurt, sadness, or fear – below hard and defended stuff like anger and justifications?
- What am I really wanting, deep down? What are the good desires underlying bad behaviors? Such as the normal desire for safety at the root of anxious rumination.
- What material here is from a time when I was younger? (For example, because I was often excluded from groups in school, I still sometimes feel like an outsider in groups when I'm really not.)
- What am I getting stuck on? Like fixating on a position or goal – or even a word. What am I trying to control that's not controllable (e.g. whether someone loves me)?
- How is my gender shaping my reactions? Or my temperament, cultural and ethnic background, or personality?

You can use these methods for insight on the fly, when things come up for you. And you can use them to drill down into a specific issue, such as sensitivity to criticism, longing for approval, tension with your parents, or efforts to get into a good relationship.

Whatever you find, try to relax and open to it. Helpful or unhelpful, it's just furniture in the mansion of your mind.

This week I will be aware of how my mind colors my reactions to daily events. I will practice looking around at the rooms in my mind to see where my reactions originate, and then I will sense beneath the surface of my reaction to see what's really going on. I will write about it here:

Do I see any patterns in my reactions to life? If so, what are they?

What have I learned about myself?



I Rule My Mind

From *A Course in Miracles*

I rule my mind, which I alone must rule.

I have a kingdom I must rule.

At times,
it does not seem I am its king at all.
It seems to triumph over me,
and tell me what to think,
and what to do
and feel.

And yet it has been given to me
to serve whatever purpose
I perceive in it.

My mind can only serve.



Workbook Studies for Week 6

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 6 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 6 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas and revelations for all your writings in class.

FINAL THOUGHT PAPER: “What is True About Me?”

Begin thinking about your final project, which is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True About Me?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to consider such questions as:

- What have I learned about myself?
- How have I changed? Why do I think the changes have taken place? What has been the result?
- How am I choosing to get involved in my life today?
- What do I most appreciate about my life?
- Where is the God of my understanding in all of it?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented on the last night of class. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.

*The deeper that sorrow carves into your being,
the more joy you can contain.*

- Kahlil Gibran

Week 6

*How you react emotionally is a choice in any
situation.*

- Judith Orloff

What Is True About My Emotions?

*Resentment is often a woman's inner signal
that she has been ignoring an important God-
given responsibility - that of making choices.*

- Brenda Waggoner

This Week

This week we consider the vast array of our feelings and emotions, without condemnation or judgment of any kind. If we believe that everything we feel teaches us something about our memories, our choices, and who we believe ourselves to be today, wouldn't we want to know what they have to say? After all, our emotions are part of us, and who we are is a beautiful thing!

*Do you imagine the universe is agitated? Go
into the desert at night and look at the stars.
This practice should answer the question.*

- Lao Tzu

*Feelings are much like waves, we can't stop
them from coming but we can choose which
one to surf.*

- Jonatan Mårtensson



What Is True About My Emotions?

Leaning into our emotions allows us to touch the sensitivity, the strength, the simplicity and the complexity of who we are and how we perceive the world. They remind us of how we hold our memories and self-worth. We can learn from them!

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about my emotions.

What is true and what isn't true about my emotions (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about my emotions (continued)



Keep smiling – unless you feel like crying

From *Shift Happens!*

By Robert Holden

I once met a woman who was suffering from “positive thinking.” I was giving a talk called *Choosing Happiness* to a group of about 500 nurses. Halfway through the talk, this woman stood up and screamed, “How do you expect me to be happy when my husband has died?!” The room fell silent.

First I thanked the woman for having the courage to share her feelings. Few people would have been so brave. Then she told us her story. Her husband had died only three weeks before from an unexpected heart attack. Since his death she had kept busy by going on different positive-thinking courses. “Nothing works,” she said. When I asked her if she had cried yet, she said, “No.”

I invited the woman onto the stage, and together we looked at how she was using positive thinking to beat her feelings into submission instead of genuinely healing them. “I want you to give up positive thinking, just for a while,” I said.

She looked absolutely dismayed. “What else can I do?” she asked. Before I could answer, she burst into tears. She cried so deeply, it was as if each teardrop carried away pieces of her grief and pain. There was barely a dry eye in the audience, either.

Two weeks after the workshop I received a letter from the woman. It read: “Every day I experience A to Z of pain, but I do what you say. I make time for my feelings now. I pray for help, my friends know how I really feel, and I am open to healing. Choosing happiness is about saying ‘yes’ to my feelings – that way they heal faster.” At the end of her letter she added a P.S.: “Thanks for making me cry!”

At psychology school there was no time or emotions in our schedule. We had plenty of time for cognition, perception, memory, behavior, and rats, but not emotions. Even rats were preferable to emotions! I have since learned that emotions are not just thoughts, and that “positive thinking” can often be misused in emotional healing. Emotions are mysterious, illogical, and deep. They cannot just be thought away. They need to be accepted, loved, and felt.

The first key to emotional healing is to *start where you are*. Your feelings are not getting in the way of your schedule; they *are* your schedule! What you are feeling is what you *should* be feeling. Sometimes healing takes precedence over your career, your social life, or any other plans you have. If you don’t give yourself the space to heal, pain will take over your

life. Just remember, on the other side of this pain is deep peace, greater abundance, and more freedom.

The second key is, *be honest about how you feel*. One of the principles of my work at The Happiness Project is, keep smiling – *unless you feel like crying*. Another principle is, you will never be truly happy if you are untruthful about your unhappiness. And don't "logicalize" your feelings. For instance, to say "I am depressed" is not enough. Depression isn't a feeling. Be open to the feelings you are "depressing." With emotional healing, *honesty is the fast policy*.

The third key is, *feel your feelings all the way through to the other side*. A feeling only has one ambition in life, and that is that it wants to be felt! Imagine telephoning a friend and being put on hold for five years. You would boil in your own stew. Well, imagine how your feelings feel when they are put on hold. Feeling is the healing process. To feel takes acceptance, openness, and love, and wherever they are, peace can eventually abide.

The fourth key is, *pain is resistance*. When you fight your feelings, it's you who always ends up hitting the canvas. What you refuse to feel will be expressed physically or unconsciously. What you try to avoid plagues you. Also, what you do not own for yourself you will project on to others, hence the saying, *hurt people hurt people*.

The fifth key is, *keep breathing because it improves your chances of happiness!* Mental "make wrong" – when you make yourself wrong, make others wrong, make your life wrong – and emotional resistance tend to create uncomfortable sensations in the body. The body feels what the mind feels, and the body blocks what the mind blocks. Let a deep, full breath be a symbol of your willingness to receive healing and let go of pain.

The sixth key is, *there is no such thing as a negative emotion*. Practice the golden rule with your feelings. In other words, treat your feelings the way you would like to be treated. Be kind, be courteous, and be open to every feeling you meet. Feelings are like little people – *when you treat them well, they treat you much better*. They may also reveal gifts that might have otherwise been withheld.

The seventh key is, *shift happens when you let go!* Feelings don't go; you let go of feelings. Whenever you are in pain, it is because you are clinging and holding on. Let your prayer be, "I am willing to let go now." Hand over all your thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs to your peaceful Unconditional Self, and affirm, "I am willing to be open to a beautiful lesson or gift here." Remember, you are not meant to heal alone. Healing is always about joining, connecting, and choosing happiness.

This week I will take time to investigate any feelings that I have been resisting. I will use the seven keys to emotional healing to pay attention to the feeling, being fully present in the process. I will write about it here:

Investigating my feelings (continued)

He Knew How He Felt

From *Choices*

By Melody Beattie

Hank cooked dinner, set the table. Went all out and lit candles, too. He opened the door and let her in when the doorbell rang. Kissed her cheek. She acted a little odd, but women did that sometimes. He knew he hadn't seen her much lately; he'd been busy with work. But Hank was a romantic at heart.

And tonight he had plans.

They ate dinner. Made small talk. He thought he was particularly charming; he was on. She finished eating. Wiped her face daintily with her napkin.

"The only reason I came over tonight is to tell you we're through," she said. Hank watched her put on her coat, grab her purse, and walk out the door.

Geez, he thought. I just got dumped.

Hank talked about what happened to his friends. He talked about how he felt, too. "It doesn't feel good," he said.

Hank knew exactly what he was feeling. The only thing he didn't want to do was feel how he actually felt.

I was talking to a woman who sees a therapist every week. "What feelings come up in your sessions?" I asked. "We don't really talk much about feelings," she said. "We talk about ways to change behaviors, intellectual kinds of things." "But what do you feel during your sessions each week?" "Hmmm," she said. "I guess the main feeling I have is bored."

I was talking to another friend in another state. Her grandmother had just died. "The hardest thing about my grief was that while I was so immersed in my feelings, my intuition was gone," she said.

"I hate feeling feelings," I said.

"Yuck," she said. "So do I."

"We can talk about them. We can use them to try to control others. We can let them control us. Or we can cut off that part of us that feels – and sometimes we need to do that as a protective device. When I first reconnected to my emotions after twenty-four years of

living life numb, every little emotion I had was such a big deal. I didn't know what to do with them or about them. I spent more time reacting to them than anything else.

"I feel this way now. Oh, now I feel like this," I'd say, telling anyone willing to hear.

It was hard to go down lower than my head. I liked to talk about how I felt. I didn't like to actually feel. Much of the time I felt like an outside observer watching myself, and usually watching myself stay emotionally stuck.

When I interviewed Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, I asked her about emotions, particularly fear. "How do you learn that lesson?" I asked. "What do you do about fear?"

"That's easy," she said. "When you're afraid, go down in the basement and scream."

She explained that many of the problems people suffer from are either due to or complicated by childhood repression of emotions. When they were children they weren't allowed to or able to just feel whatever they felt – whether it was hurt, scared, angry, afraid, or any of the colorful nuances and shades our emotions can take.

No, we don't let feelings dictate our behavior. But if we don't feel them, that's what they're likely to do. No, it's usually not helpful to beat others over their heads with what we feel. It doesn't release our feeling, and it usually just annoys them. Yes, it's sometimes helpful to share with someone how we feel – as part of the process of either resolving problems, being intimate, or getting through a tough time.

It's helpful for those of us who disconnected from our feelings to know that however we feel at any moment in time is a valid and valuable event and that others have felt that way, too.

And if for some reason we've gone numb, we may need professional help.

But for the most part, our feelings are our own personal deal.

The real irony is this: some of the happiest, most joy-filled people I know are people who have been through some of the worst pain in the world. I don't know exactly why that happens, although it's part of the opposites thing. But this is my guess: once we're no longer afraid to feel any feeling that comes our way, we really do become happy, joyous and free.

Go ahead. Do the opposite of what you think. Take a risk. Come back into balance. Feel what you feel. Or at least be willing to try. Feeling all our emotions gives color and passion to life.

So often we think, *Well, I've got to control that emotion, figure out in my head what to do next, which choice I should make.*

When we allow ourselves to feel that emotion we're trying to escape, it can be like magic. We just naturally know what to do next.

I will take some time to contemplate a current challenge. Next I will become willing to feel my emotions about that challenge. Am I feeling afraid, feeling unworthy, resentful? I will write about it here:

After spending some time with the emotions that surfaced, do I have some idea about what to do next? Even a slight shift in perspective counts!

Self-Inquiry

From *Until Today!*

By Iyanla Vanzant

I will gain more understanding when I realize ... how I interpret what comes at me is a reflection of what is in me.

When something someone says or does upsets you, *your upset* is not about the other person. Feelings are triggered *within you* when an external source bumps into something that is already there. A *self-inquiry* will help you figure out what you are hiding that is being triggered by what you are experiencing.

When you least expect it, truth will fly out of someone's mouth. That truth will burn a hole in your defenses, and chances are it is going to upset you. More than likely you will direct your upset toward the person who released the truth you were denying, ignoring or trying to excuse away. If, on the other hand, you turn inward, then you are opening the door to a wholesome self-inquiry that will ultimately lead you to something that needs to be healed.

A self-inquiry indicates your desire to take charge of rampant emotions so that you are not *manipulated like a puppet* by the things that go on around you. A self-inquiry begins the moment you experience the upset and ask the question, *What am I feeling?* Once you get the nature of the feeling, you must ask yourself, *Why am I feeling this?* The answer is likely to be, *Because so-and-so did such-and-such! WRONG!* Do not lay your feelings in someone else's lap. Take charge! Call forth your issues so that they can be healed. Doing anything less will leave you out of touch with you and at the mercy of everything and everyone.

Until today, you may have been tricked into believing that people can upset you... If your trigger is pulled, run to the nearest quiet place and begin your healing process with a self-inquiry.

Today I am devoted to healing myself of the need to react to the actions of others!

This week I will find time for two processes of self-inquiry. Each will be about a comment or situation that has triggered me. They may be about something that took place in the recent past or right now.

I will describe the first situation here.

What was the trigger?

What am I feeling?

Why am I feeling this?

What issues are being healed?

I will describe the second situation here.

What was the trigger?

What am I feeling?

Why am I feeling this?

What issues are being healed?

Self-Inquiry, Part II

From *Until Today!*

By Iyanla Vanzant

I will gain more understanding when I realize ... I have an ongoing relationship with things I cannot see but can feel.

Today's message is a continuation of yesterday's message regarding self-inquiry. Self-inquiry is the process of discovering what it is within you that is hurt by what goes on around you. A self-inquiry is a healing process. Self-inquiry puts you in touch with vital information about yourself which you have ignored, denied or may not be aware of.

The third question in our self-inquiry is, *What is the memory that is the source of this feeling? In other words, When was the first time I felt this way?* If you take a deep breath and call forth the truth of your being, this will be the Bingo response! This is the question that will remind you of who it was that first made you feel this way. What the experience was that first triggered this feeling. What you expected or were denied that first gave rise to this feeling. How this situation reminds you of that situation. Armed with this information, your healing is imminent.

When you remember the first time you felt this way, *you must pray! Dear God: I now forgive myself for all beliefs, judgments, decisions, choices and agreements that have caused me to be attached to pain, hurt, shame, anger, guilt, disappointment... I ask that you transform what I am feeling, experiencing and believing into an expression of love so that I may be healed. Thank you, God...*

Just for today, take the time to go back and heal your mind, heart, and soul of the things which are no longer relevant.

Today I am devoted to being freed from past beliefs, judgments, decisions, choices and agreements that [are] triggers!

With this new understanding, I will now go back to each of the two situations on the previous pages and ask: What is the memory that is the source of this feeling? When was the first time I felt this way?

In the first situation, the feeling was ...

What is the memory that is the source of this feeling?

When was the first time I felt this way?

I will now pray my version of Iyanla’s prayer, knowing that the God of my understanding loves me without reservation.

What am I feeling after my prayer?

In the second situation, the feeling was ...

What is the memory that is the source of this feeling?

When was the first time I felt this way?

Once again I will pray my version of Iyanla’s prayer, knowing that I am never alone, that I am noticed, valued, and guided by the greatest love of all.

Here I will write my feeling after my prayer.

What am I feeling after this process?

What is true for *me*?



The Milk of Loving

By Rumi

God created the child, that is, your wanting,
so that it might cry out,
so that milk might come.

Cry out!
Don't be stolid and silent with your pain.

Lament!
And let the milk of loving flow into you.



Workbook Studies for Week 7

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 7 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 7 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas and revelations for all your writings in class.

FINAL THOUGHT PAPER: “What is True About Me?”

Continue to contemplate your final project, which is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True About Me?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to consider such questions as:

- What have I learned about myself?
- How have I changed? Why do I think the changes have taken place? What has been the result?
- How am I choosing to get involved in my life today?
- What do I most appreciate about my life?
- Where is the God of my understanding in all of it?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented on the last night of class. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.

*All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator
for all I have not seen.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Week 7

What Is True About My Faith?

This Week

This week is a celebration of our faith, whether we have a little bit of faith or a lot of it. Faith is learned from our experiences with life, from the sure knowing that everything will be okay to those moments of revelation that cause us to catch our breath in wonder. As we become more spiritually aware, our faith deepens and expands. Wherever we are in that awakening is perfect!

*You do not need to know precisely what is
happening, or exactly where it is all going.
What you need is to recognize the possibilities
and challenges offered by the present moment,
and to embrace them with courage, faith and
hope.*

- Thomas Merton

*If we can just let go and trust that things will
work out the way they're supposed to, without
trying to control the outcome, then we can
begin to enjoy the moment more fully. The joy
of the freedom it brings becomes more
pleasurable than the experience itself.*

- Goldie Hawn

*The clouds above us join and separate, the
breeze in the courtyard leaves and returns. Life
is like that, so why not relax? Who can stop us
from celebrating?*

- Lu Yu

*It is this belief in a power larger than myself,
and other than myself, which allows me to
venture into the unknown and even the
unknowable.*

- Maya Angelou



What Is True About My Faith?

Faith is kind of like a muscle – the more I use it, the stronger it becomes. How can I have faith in something I can't see but is as close as my breath? This week I practice with an almost child-like belief in the mystery of life and the goodness of the universe.

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about my faith.

What is true and what isn't true about my faith (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about my faith (continued)



Book of Surrender

From *Let Go, Let Miracles Happen*

By Kathy Cordova

Do you have a dream? A problem? Go ahead, write it down, then close the book.

- Jill Althouse-Wood

Reading a good book is my favorite way to end the day. When I lose myself in someone else's drama, I'm able to forget about the dishes in the sink and my dentist appointment the next day. When I open the book, my body relaxes. Then when I shut the book I let go of the day and sleep.

But with morning, my life comes rushing back to me with its doses of unfulfilled desires, unmet goals, and bothers that range from petty to painful. I've learned that with these things, too, I can transform them by "shutting the book."

The process began for me four years ago, when I saw some dresses in a catalog. I had just given birth to my daughter and returned from a long maternity leave. I was beginning to get back into shape, but unfortunately our finances hadn't rebounded as quickly as my waistline.

As much as I longed for two of the dresses, we couldn't afford them. On a whim, I cut out the pictures of those two dresses and pasted them in a blank book. Days later I added pictures of other things I wanted: a garden, dogs, even a smiling girl in rainbow tights.

Eventually I didn't care so much that the dresses weren't hanging in my closet. The fact that I pasted them into a collage gave me ownership. I had a larger vision for myself – a sense of what I wanted that ownership to feel like. I closed the book and forgot about them.

A few weeks later, I heard a radio ad about a warehouse sale. One day that week, I left work early and stopped at the warehouse, just a few blocks from where I had to pick up my children at the sitter. All the clothing items at this sale were \$10 – a small fraction of the price of the dresses in the catalog!

Inside that warehouse I found the exact matches to the pictures in my book. I couldn't believe it. They were manufactured at that very site, one town away from where I lived and worked.

As time passed, I began to notice other things in my book materializing. What was it about putting pictures on paper that gave my ideas such power?

I realized that it wasn't the pictures or words themselves that were carrying out my will, but that I had given my dreams a home other than my mind. I had taken them out of the worry zone and closed the book on them.

Since that time I've expanded my practice. I include questions and prayer – whatever I need the Universe to handle – in my Book of Surrender. Sometimes the answers are instant. Sometimes it takes years before I see the results.

My husband tends to discount my observations on the subject. He's a logical man who would rather believe in coincidences than the spiritual workings of the Universe.

His proof came when he was job hunting. For most of the year he had been sending out resumes with no good prospects on the horizon. I told him to write down exactly what he wanted in a job. He refused with the argument that he didn't want to box himself into such a narrow description. He was desperate to get away from his old job; he did not need an ideal.

But on a long road trip, he gave in and dictated his thoughts on his perfect job. I wrote his every specification, even when he said he wanted a job that included some time on the golf course. When we were finished, we decided to forget our jobs and enjoy our vacation.

He got the call on his cellular phone while we were 1,000 miles from home. It was a personnel director from a local company wanting him to come in for an interview. My husband now works for that company and was put in charge of the company golf league his first year.

I know why spiritual surrender is so powerful and why this method has worked so well. The pages of my Book of Surrender became a training ground for the things I wanted to bring into reality. But I needed to let go of my hopes as outcomes and release them.

Do you have a dream? A problem? Go ahead. Write it down, then close the book.

- Jill Althouse-Wood

Faith is power. When we obsess about our problems and the things we lack, that is what will manifest in our reality. By imagining the possibilities – our positive intentions – clearly, then letting them go and having faith in the benevolence of the Universe, we remove the barriers of our limited thoughts and open the path for wonderful things to come our way.

This week I will reflect back on my life to the times I wanted something, and then I got it, whether it was a particular item or an answer to a problem. How might faith have played a part?

How might faith have played a part (continued)

What do I want next?

This week I will try the suggestions in this article; I will write down what I want on this page and paste pictures of it on the next pages. Then I will close the book, knowing the Universe will take care of it.

What I Want: writing it down

What I Want: pictures

What I Want: more thoughts and pictures

Open To Possibilities!

From *Turtle Wisdom*

By Donna DeNomme

Making choices is the most powerful thing that you do in your life. Choices liberate and they imprison. They create illness and they create health. They shape your life ... Each choice creates a future. It brings into being one of the many possible futures. That is the future you will live in.

- Gary Zukav, *Soul Stories*

Your most evolved self is “calling you.” It is beckoning you to become all that you can be. There is no specific role or destiny you must live out, but rather a vast array of potential possibilities for you to explore and express your true self. While your innermost core pushes you to gift the world with your unique talents, you alone guide your path, because you have the freedom to choose what direction that expression takes. We all need your contribution. What you have to offer is not exactly like anyone else’s part. As puzzle pieces connect to form a beautiful image, many souls unite for the good of our planetary evolution.

What would life be like if you lived from this inner core connection, living your potential moment by moment? What if your thoughts, words, and actions were conscious ones, embracing the life you were given and living it fully? Life is such an incredible opportunity to bring forth your greatest creation. Be delighted to share yourself with the world. Be invested in how you are living your life and make adjustments when necessary to remain aligned with your true expression. Every moment has significance. Every contribution affects the whole.

Sometimes we fear failure, but other times we fear success. More often than you might think, people will sabotage their accomplishments right before they come to fruition. Have you ever observed someone who worked for years towards a goal and then, just before achieving it, suddenly switched directions and missed the mark? In the field of physical and personal healing, this shows up when someone is not ready for the healing. Perhaps there is still a nuance to be experienced for a lesson to be learned.

Succeeding may also make us visible in a way we fear. We are out there, vulnerable in the sharing of our innermost self.

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us...
Your playing small does not serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that
other people won't feel insecure about you...
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously
give other people permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence
automatically liberates others.*

- Marianne Williamson

Develop a faith in yourself that urges you to step out in ways your inner being longs to express. Experiment. Take a chance. What have you got to lose? Explore new ideas. Pursue your dreams. When all is said and done, do you want to come to the end of your life with doubts about what is still undone? Doubts about the parts not yet lived? Or would you rather live life with zest and participation, choosing your focus consciously and knowing that whatever the outcome, your life was your own?

You did it your way!

*Afoot and light-hearted,
I take to the open road. Healthy, free, the world before me, the long brown path leading
wherever I choose.*

- Walt Whitman

Are there places in my life where I've been playing small? Without judgment, I'll write about them here, investigating the reasons why I am playing small, settling for less than what I can have, do, or be.

Why I am playing small (continued)

What old beliefs or thoughts may still be lingering, causing me to be less than I know I can truly be?

Am I willing to let my light shine, to step out into the world, *owning* my life? I will give my answer and explain it here.

What is it that I really want to have, do, or be?

What next steps am I willing to take toward making that happen?

Here are some thoughts, words and pictures that symbolize my intention for a more fulfilled life and my willingness to move toward it:

Effortless Being

From *Freedom Is Liberating Your Boundless Potential*

By Brandon Bays

*Effortless being is the sublime presence
that suffuses all fragrances of grace.
It is whole, free, and completely at ease –
and it requires nothing.
Just let yourself relax ... trust ... open ...
and gracefully fall into effortless being.*

Let's begin our journey together with "effortless being," as it is the one quality of grace that is intrinsic to an inherent in all aspects of the infinite. Any time you open into the infinite presence of your own self, an effortless presence will have easily and gracefully guided you there. In fact, the only route I know of into enlightened awareness is through effortless being.

So why not plunge in right now? Rather than talk about it, let's experience it directly.

Take a deep breath in, and let it out.

And another deep breath in, and let it out.

Let your whole being relax as you fully put yourself into the scene I am about to describe. As you read, experience it as if it is actually happening right now. Take time in between the sentences to open and *feel* what it would really be like to be in these circumstances. Just imagine that *you* are the person described in the story.

You are in the ocean, out of your depth, struggling to stay afloat. The more you struggle, the less buoyant you feel. Each effort becomes more and more exhausting. Fighting what is, you believe the answer lies in trying harder ... reaching, grasping with your whole being, striving with your body, harnessing your mind, trying to focus all of your energy to stay above water – you fight for your life. Your activity becomes frenetic. A sinking futility starts to creep in, but you realize you can't give in, no matter what. You force your mind into high gear. You struggle with all your might. Your striving becomes frantic.

A kind person throws you a life preserver, but it lands just out of reach. Safety is but a few feet away, if only you could grasp it in time. Certain that effort is the only answer, you harness every fiber of your being, desperately trying to grasp the answer to all your prayers, knowing that peace, rest, life itself is just an arm's length away ... just out of reach. If only you try harder, the prize of safety, relaxation, freedom will be yours.

But with each fiercely desperate stroke you end up pushing the life preserver farther away. The fight intensifies. You feel your mind starting to spin out of control. You force it into line – everything depends on this final struggle, but your very striving is driving it farther ... and farther ... and farther away ...

Finally, the kind stranger jumps into the water, and when he bobs to the surface, all movement ceases. He appears motionless ... as if he is just resting, trusting. Gently, under the surface, his legs flow in the quietest of movements ... effortlessly treading water, trusting completely in the ease of grace. As the water becomes still around him, the life preserver freely drifts his way ... lap ... by lap ... by lap. The life preserver finds its way into his relaxed and trusting hands, and with almost no movement – more a softly whispered prayer than an actual motion – he glides it your way.

Still frantic, you grasp for it desperately, but your motion only causes it to drift out of reach again. The desperation becomes unbearable ...

You hear a reassuring voice say, “*Relax. Just relax. Trust ... You’re safe ... All safety is here ... Everything you need is already here.*” Then, once again, the kind man who trusts the ocean, trusts grace, softly floats the life preserver in your direction.

As the preserver gets closer, the desire to reach for it becomes fiercely strong. But before you can thrust out your hand, you hear the stranger say again, “*Just relax.*”

And something penetrates: it happens in a heartbeat. Against all instincts and conditioning, against everything you believe to be true, you *choose to cease striving*. You relax. You relax your mind. You give up all struggle and relax your whole being. You feel your body softening and, miraculously, the life preserver begins to effortlessly drift your way.

Then, just before it’s ready to softly touch your chest, *something happens*. Time stops. Everything becomes still. Your breathing slows and becomes easy. Your mind softens, every ounce of activity ceases, and your body releases all tension. You become aware that you are being gently supported, embraced in an ocean of trust. In the still center of the silence, you realize all grace is here, surrounding you, supporting you. All peace is here ... and you relax deeply in the restful embrace of grace.

You become aware that the life preserver has just tapped you on the chest, and in that instant you realize you don’t actually need it. You *never* needed it. You’re already safe, already whole, already free. You’re floating in an ocean of trust.

Gently, one arm floats to the side of the preserver, and you look around to see if anyone else is struggling against life. It’s like some big cosmic joke. You recognize that everything you seek is already here the moment you *choose to stop the struggle, relax, and trust*. This that had seemed so far out of reach is realized to be everywhere, in everything. And that “something out there, if only I could get hold of it” is realized to be *right here*, as a vast embrace, constantly supporting you in an ocean of presence.

Here I will write about a time that I struggled because I didn't know that I could relax and trust that everything would be okay.

What did I learn from it?

Here I will write about a time that I quit struggling. Instead I relaxed and trusted that everything would be okay.

What did I learn from it?



I Am Held in Compassionate Arms

From *Prayers to the Great Creator*

By Julia Cameron

The universe is tender toward my heart.
I count this a great blessing and I trust it.

Frightened, threatened, or overwhelmed,
I place my emotional safety in the hands of a loving universe.
I ask for protection, wisdom, and discernment.

Knowing that I am cared for and protected,
I am alert for support and security coming to me from many directions.
I find supportive people, comforting events, unexpected
and gracious encounters.

The world is not a hostile place. I am aided and safe.
The world is my home.
I am aided, safe and protected.



Workbook Studies for Week 8

WRITING

- ♥ **Week 8 Workbook:** Read and respond to the Week 8 articles and exercises.
- ♥ Please be ready to share your thoughts, ideas and revelations for all your writings in class.

FINAL THOUGHT PAPER: “What is True About Me?”

Prepare your final project, which is an oral presentation of a thought paper entitled, “What Is True About Me?” After thoughtfully exploring your opinions and insights throughout the course of this class, this is your opportunity to pull it all together. You may want to consider such questions as:

- What have I learned about myself?
- How have I changed? Why do I think the changes have taken place? What has been the result?
- How am I choosing to get involved in my life today?
- What do I most appreciate about my life?
- Where is the God of my understanding in all of it?

Your Thought Paper will last five minutes and will be presented next week. You can read your paper or talk about it. Optional: You may also include drawings, photos, poems or any other visual representation of your experience of what is true about you.

DESSERTS

- ♥ Feel free to bring light desserts next week for our break, if you wish.

You don't have a Soul. You are a Soul. You have a body.

- C. S. Lewis

Week 8

Neither failure nor success has the power to change your inner state of Being.

- Eckhart Tolle

What Is True About Me?

Now and then it's good to pause in our pursuit of happiness and just be happy.

- Guillaume Apollinaire

This Week

This week I reflect on who I know myself to be in my life today. Am I the roles that I play, or am I much more than that? If so, what and who am I? Sensing that there is more to me than meets the human eye, how will I choose to live my life? After all, my life is a glorious expression of *me*!

The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions, and not our circumstances.

- Martha Washington

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.

- Helen Keller



What Is True About Me?

I have now spent eight weeks contemplating what I believe to be true about the many aspects of my life. The journey is one of awakening to my own self-worth. After all, am I not the most important part of my world? Don't I deserve my love and attention? Yes, I do!

Knowing that this is my personal workbook with no right or wrong answers, I use these three pages for some beginning thoughts about what is true and what isn't true about me.

What is true and what isn't true about me (continued)

What is true and what isn't true about me (continued)



You are what you seek!

From *Shift Happens!*

By Robert Holden

I first met Susan in a mental-health hospital in London. Susan was a lawyer, 30-something, tall, with dark hair and olive skin, attractive, witty, intelligent, and very depressed. This was her fourth time as an inpatient. She was diagnosed with chronic, treatment-resistant depression.

Susan was sitting in the patients' lounge. She was playing with a jigsaw puzzle. I said hello and asked her how she was getting on.

“Okay,” she said.

“It looks like you have nearly finished the puzzle,” I said.

“Yeah, but I probably won't finish it,” replied Susan.

“Why not?”

“Well, I suspect there's a piece missing.”

I saw Susan again at the end of my visit. She was reading a magazine.

“Did you finish the puzzle?” I asked.

“Yeah,” she replied.

“What about the missing piece?” I asked.

“Everything was here,” she said and smiled.

“Great!”

“Yeah, I always think there must be a piece missing. It's the story of my life,” she said. We both smiled because we both knew what she was really talking about.

The fear that something is missing somewhere in you or in your life is the greatest illusion of all. It is a rogue thought that can wreak havoc with perception, creating much self-doubt, self-criticism, and self-attack. It is a dastardly magician that conjures up mental tricks of lack, loss, isolation, neediness, dependency, and much pain.

The fear that something is missing in you is what leads you to search *somewhere else* for happiness. You overlook what is already here as you chase after there; you miss the sacred now as you ponder your next step; you forget to be grateful for what is as you prey after more. You search, struggle, and strive, but you never arrive because you can't get past the thought that something is missing.

Can you see that all your pain comes from the belief that your source of happiness is outside you? This single misperception – this little fear – is what feeds your mental junk, your learned unworthiness, and your “not good enough” stuff. Notice how all your thoughts of fear and lack are reversed the moment you accept that every piece of universal joy rests already in your heart. Feel this, now.

Every culture has its sacred sites and holy meeting grounds. Thousands of people every day travel in pilgrimage to far off places like Lourdes, the Great Pyramids, Ayers Rock, the Grand Canyon, Mount Shasta, Stonehenge, Mount Athos, and the Himalayas. These places hold sacred energy, they say. And yet, nowhere is more sacred than the human heart – home of your Unconditioned Self. *You are sacred ground.* Do you see this?

Your two physical eyes see bits of things. They see bits of the color spectrum, bits of the landscape, bits of the ocean, and bits of the sky. They see bits of you and bits of me. But they do not see the big picture. It is only when you look with the heart that you can begin to comprehend the possibility of true wholeness, true beauty, and true oneness.

It is my experience that the most amazing people act as if everything is already here. Great artists tune in to something universal when they create. Great thinkers trust in a solution for every problem. Great leaders lend themselves to guidance and inspiration. Great healers see people's wholeness long before any cure arrives.

Imagine that! Imagine whatever you want is here right now. What do you want? Wisdom? It's already here. Peace? It's already here. Inspiration? It's here already. It's all here, because you are. This is the big picture. This is what your Unconditioned Self sees.

You are what you seek. This means that whatever joy you hoped “to get” after you found your true partner, got the dream job, bought the ideal home, and earned the right money is *already in you!* When you search for love, joy, power, money, Heaven, and God, you are really searching for the experience of your Unconditioned Self that is unencumbered by fear, separation, and lack.

You are not here to find happiness; you are here to extend it. You are inspiration packed, wisdom infused, made with love, and blessed with joy. And so is everyone else. To be free all you have to do is make yourself wholly available to what is already inside you. Real healing is giving up your resistance to your Unconditioned Self.

Here is some *graffiti for the soul*. “I am what I seek.” Write it up and stick it in your wallet. Truth is here, inspiration is here, love is here, peace is here, help is here, God is here, because you are here. Truth is a pathless land, and happiness is a *journey without distance*.

Robert Holden says “...your Unconditioned Self is your original potential. It is the memory of God that you forget about as you grow up and *stuff* happens, i.e. bumps, bruises, school grades, puberty, heartbreaks, job interviews, rejections, parking tickets, the rat race, traffic, the mortgage, a pension, etc.

Since time began, the wise ones in every culture have carried a torch for the Unconditioned Self. This Self is like an inner light with no off switch. You may lose sight of it, but it never goes out.”

What is true for me about my Unconditioned Self? Do I sense it? If so, what does it feel like to me?

At this time I will consider that happiness is my inner light that has no off switch, and that I can *choose* happiness. What does that mean to me?

How can I shine my inner light of happiness in every aspect of my life: in my home, in my self-worth, in my relationships, in my finances, in my health, in my creativity, in my relationship with the God of my understanding?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my home?

What else can I do to shine that light in my home?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my self-worth?

What else can I do to shine that light in my feelings of self-worth?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my relationships?

What else can I do to shine that light in my relationships?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my finances?

What else can I do to shine that light in my attitude about money and in managing my financial affairs?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my health?

What else can I do to shine that light in honoring my physical, mental and emotional self?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my creativity?

What else can I do to shine that light in the things that sing out as my creative expression?

How am I shining the light of happiness in my relationship with my God?

What else can I do to shine that light in my relationship with the God of my understanding?

From Reel to Real

From *Spiritual Liberation*

By Michael Bernard Beckwith

*I'm ready to run and I'm ready to leap into what is real
I got a sweet invitation, a mandate of ecstasy*

The universe is forever sending out a casting call to us to accept our starring role in an A-list movie: stepping out of the movie reel version of our life and accepting the real role of who and what we are – our Authentic Self. As we sit in our inner screening room observing the moment-to-moment changing scenery of our life, we may wonder what indeed is the part we have come to play on this great stage of life. Only spiritual technology is advanced enough to edit our current points of view, to cut our illusions about what is real, and to leave them on the cutting room floor of consciousness. *Most people do not experience Reality but rather their thoughts about Reality.* However, our thinking about Reality does not put us in touch with our Authentic Self. When authenticity itself speaks through our words, thinks through our thoughts, walks through our feet, serves through our hands and loves through our hearts, our lives have become Real.

The mind provides the film on which we record the movie of our life. When watching this movie, if we are honest, we can see that its theme is what we think reality is, which probably deserves about a two-star rating. “I’ve been playing this part for thirty-five years,” we self-proclaim. “It’s a wrap – and all within my karmic budget.” We’re practically ready to ask for our own autograph! I’ve heard professional actors say that they can become so self-identified with a role that they actually forget that their character is not real. I read about an actor who played Moses. He had so merged his personality with his part that even after the movie was in the theaters, he still walked around with a staff and wore a beard. You may have heard or read interviews with actors who’ve said they’ve been typecast in a specific role so often that their agents and fans can’t see them playing another one. In the theater of life, we too can become so identified with the parts we play that we can’t imagine being anyone other than the surface persona we have created and present to the world.

Of course, we also audition others and assign them roles to play in our life’s epic. These additional actors are needed so that we can project onto them characteristics and actions for which we don’t want to take responsibility. “They” are the bad guys, the monsters, the villains who make us our movie’s hero or heroine. When scenes of negativity are projected onto the screen of our life, we exclaim, “Oh, that’s my mother’s fault,” or “My ex-husband made me do it,” or “My boss just doesn’t understand me.” But this is the result of a fuzzy camera lens. When we refocus with objectivity, we see the facts more clearly and become

willing to take self-responsibility for our life's circumstances. We spiritually mature and drop the blame game. We realize that there is no one to blame, only ignorance.

Accepting the Role of the Authentic Self

When we begin to feel claustrophobic in our movie, it is an indication that we have outgrown our part, which causes us to review our role, to look at it afresh. With clarity of view, we can begin shredding the ego's false sense of self-importance and accept the part of a lifetime: the Authentic Self. The transition from the egoic self to the Authentic Self requires discipline, which all skilled actors have. The good news is that discipline eventually becomes what I call a "blissipline" because it leads to playing our part with integrity, dignity, elegance, passion, and deep contentment.

Sometimes, however, even when we know that it's time to quit a role, we postpone due to suffering from "analysis-paralysis." The symptoms include rounds of relentless questioning, such as, "What if I don't like my next part? What if it stretches me further than I'm comfortable going? What if no one likes me in my new role?" This is when it's time to sit down, get in touch with our inner set designer, and haul out the prop or self-discipline.

The "Blissipline" in Discipline

We've all experienced how discipline sometimes causes an automatic rebellion or resistance within us. We don't like the energy around the word *discipline*, perhaps because of the place it has occupied in our upbringing, education, or religion. However, a healthy view of discipline keeps us on track in areas of our life where we've determined to make a change. *Discipline is a practice of self-love, self-respect, and surrender that results in freedom.*

Let's say, for example, that you've decided to incorporate a daily practice of meditating before you leave for work each morning. You love the results you get from the times you do meditate – clarity, stability, strength, communion with the Self – and you're now willing to do what it takes to make it a daily part of your morning routine. Everything is going along just fine when, out of the blue, your mate can't take the children to school in the morning and you have to pitch in for a couple of weeks. Instead of getting up just a little earlier in the morning to accommodate this new responsibility and still have time to meditate, you tell yourself, "Oh, I just don't feel like it, and, besides, I need my rest." What happened? Your emotional reasoning justified your decision not to make the necessary effort to honor your aspiration to meditate every morning.

The gift of self-discipline is that it has the power to take you beyond the reasoning of temporary emotion to freedom. Think of how empowered you've felt on occasions when you haven't given in to the "I don't feel like it" syndrome and honored your commitment to yourself. What does not *feeling* like it have to do with it? The combination of love for something with the willingness to do what it takes to practice it – discipline – results in freedom...

Your Feature Role in *Earth Walk*

Some of us are of an age that we can remember going to movie theaters at a time when you could look back to the projection room window and follow the beam of light from the movie projector right onto the screen. All of the characters on the screen seemed so real that you could be brought to tears, laughter, fear, and delight. Yet, if you turned around and followed the beam of light back to the projection room, you could see that it was nothing but a play of light. The characters were never really alive on the screen, only the light was there.

The movie featured in our three-dimensional Earth theater is projected from the Light of the Ineffable onto the screen of Life. Each of us has a feature role in this movie titled *Earth Walk*. Consciousness is the Light that projects the film onto the screen of our awareness. When we sit in deep meditation and interior prayer, we attune ourselves to that Light and an opening is created for us to move from the movie reel version of our life into the Real joy of existence.

Most of the time, we are experiencing a movie about what we believe life to be, not what it actually is. When things get a little too dull for the ego, we consciously or unconsciously stir up drama. But as we begin to move from the movie reel version of our life to the Real, we realize that we write, edit, and finalize our own script. Our assignment is to play our part well with gusto, creativeness, passion, and juice, all the while understanding that we are the Light form which we have come and to which we return after the curtain goes down on this incarnation. May each and every one of us enthusiastically, with whole-souled commitment, take our cues directly from our Source and joyously dance together on this stage called Life.

Affirmation

*Right here and right now, I rebirth the Real in my awareness.
I activate clear seeing and allow it to light my way in all that I
think, say, and do throughout this day.
I play my part of the stage of life with gusto, openhearted joy,
and wisdom.*

In what ways am I still living the old roles in the movie of my life?

In what ways am I still living the old roles in the movie of my life? (continued)

In what ways have I continued to assign roles to other people – the characters in my movie?

In what ways have I stopped playing the “blame game,” taking self-responsibility for my life?

How has self-discipline helped me take responsibility for my life?

How am I playing my part of the stage of life with gusto, openhearted joy, and wisdom?



For a New Beginning

By John O'Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling your emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning

That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

